

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Written by Utah Department of Health

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Everyone seems to know someone with breast cancer, and we wonder whether we, too, will be affected during our lifetime. Aside from skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. Women make up more than 50% of the American workforce, and approximately 44% of those diagnosed with cancer will be employed at the time of their diagnosis. So for Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, take some time to learn about your risk for breast cancer and take steps to reduce your risk.



All of us want to do everything we can to reduce the risk of ever getting this disease. There are some factors that are beyond our control. For instance, we can't change our gender. Women are much more likely than men to have breast cancer. This is mostly because women have more estrogen and progesterone in their bodies. These hormones stimulate normal and abnormal breast cell growth alike. Also, we can't stop growing older and aging is the biggest risk factor for breast cancer (besides being a woman).

But there are some things that are within our control that can help you reduce our risk of developing breast cancer. Risk reduction means making choices to avoid or minimize any possible risk factors that you can. It also means increasing the protective factors in your life so your chances of developing breast cancer are lower. There are no perfect solutions, but you can do many things to reduce your risk, including:

- **Control your weight and exercise.** Make healthy choices in the foods you eat and the kinds of drinks you have each day. Stay active.
- **Know your family history of breast cancer.** If you have a mother, sister, or daughter with breast cancer, ask your doctor what is your risk of getting breast cancer and how you can lower your risk.
- **Find out the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy.** Some women use hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to treat the symptoms of menopause. Ask your doctor about the risks and benefits of HRT and find out if hormone replacement therapy is right for you.
- **Get screened for breast cancer regularly.** Regular screening tests for breast cancer, such as an annual mammogram and a breast exam during your annual checkup, allow you and your doctor to ensure that your breasts are as healthy as they can be. Screening also increases the likelihood that your doctor will find breast cancer early when it's most treatable. If you want to be screened for breast cancer, call your doctor's office. They can help you schedule an

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appointment. Most insurance companies, including PEHP, pay for the cost of breast cancer screening tests, as well as most other preventive screenings. So there's no excuse for not getting screened!

It is important to know your own level of risk. Then you can talk to your doctor about ways to lessen controllable risk factors and boost your protective factors. Take charge of your health today!